

Reply to Office Action of April 12, 2006

REMARKS

Claims 1-3 have been cancelled and new claims 4 – 15 have been added. Claims 4 – 15 remain in the application. As presently amended the application includes one independent and a total of 12 claims. Applicant has previously paid for three independent and a total of 20 claims. No new fees are owing.

New claim 4 is narrower than now cancelled claim 1 in one respect: it requires that the adhesive sheets comprise a non-woven base material in which a moisture resistant adhesive resin is permeated. In most other respects, new claim 4 is broader than now cancelled claim 1.

As noted below, the newly added limitation clearly defines over the art of record. As set forth on pages 1 and 2 of the application, applicants have discovered that prior art steering wheels having surface materials formed of a plural of ligneous plates, when subject to high humidity for long periods of time, crack in the joint between two halves. Applicants believe that this occurs because moisture is allowed to get behind the exterior surface of the surface material to swell the material and form cracks. Applicants have further discovered that this problem can be solved by utilizing adhesive sheets between the ligneous plates that are made of a non-woven material impregnated with adhesive resin. Non-woven materials provide a sufficient thickness to ensure, when permeated with the resin, a significant humidity barrier. Additionally, the non-woven material is stronger than the woven materials of the prior art and therefore reduce the chance that the base material will be torn during the manufacturing process.

The art of record is silent as to the desirability of using a non-woven material in this context and does not suggest the advantageous results achieved by the use of non-woven material.

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The examiner has proffered two alternative bases for rejecting now cancelled claim 1. The first is the combination of the APA¹ and Kawada. However, neither the APA or Kawada disclose or suggest the use of a non-woven material impregnated with an adhesive resin for the adhesive layer. As such, claim 4 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

The examiner's second rejection is based upon the APA in view of Cavalli. Once again this art does not disclose or suggest the use of a non-woven material for the base material of the adhesive layer. As such, claim 4 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 5 – 15 depend from claim 4 and include all of the limitations recited therein. These claims recite additional limitations which, along with the limitations of claim 4, are neither disclosed nor suggest in the art of record. Accordingly, these claims are also believed to be in condition for allowance.

Reconsideration and allowance of the application are earnestly solicited.

Dated:

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ The examiner has referred to Fig. 7 as prior art. This is not the case. As discussed at, inter alia, page 4, lines 7 – 8 of the specification, Fig. 7 is a planar view of the invention. The prior art is only shown in Figs. 9 and 10. The examiner's confusion is apparently the result of typographical errors on pages 1 and 2 of the specification (now corrected) which made reference to Fig. 7 rather than Fig. 9. However, the description on these pages clearly relates to Fig. 9 and not Fig. 7.